

Jury duty should be savored, not shunned

Have you ever been in a situation where a family member or a friend comes to you asking you for advice that relates to your profession? For instance, I am sure there are many doctors and nurses who are asked, "Do you think my son's wrist is fractured?"

I have a sister-in-law who is an MRI technician. Therefore, people assume that she knows how to read any and all X-rays. Police officers are often asked how to get out of a ticket. Accountants are often asked to review tax returns to ensure that no mistakes were made by the preparer.

One of the most common questions that I have been asked, both as an attorney and a judge is, "How can I get out of jury duty?"

The Michigan Supreme Court has proclaimed May 2005 Juror Appreciation month. The Court wants people to realize how much judges in the state appreciate the vital role that juries play in our justice system.

The right to a jury trial is a basic democratic principle. Most people are aware that the United States and Michigan



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Constitutions provide for a trial by our peers. Many people do not realize, however, that the colonists' loss of that right helped spark the Revolutionary War.

The founders of our country knew that the jury was a safeguard against tyranny and oppression. The jury system provides a balance of the power of the state with the power of the community. Consequently, it is a right that should be deeply cherished and preserved.

I always tell jurors that in a trial situation, they have the most important job of anyone in the courtroom. Jurors decide whether someone is guilty or not guilty of a crime.

They also must decide whether an individual or entity is liable or not liable of some act. Finally, they decide monetary damages. This is an

extremely important role in our judicial system.

We recognize that jury service involves sacrifices of time, money, and convenience. However, it is one of the most important duties members of a free society are asked to perform.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, author Harper Lee wrote: "A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men (and women) who make it up."

As a judge in this community, I am proud of all those who appear for jury duty, whether they serve or not. It has been my experience that the men and women in this community take that duty seriously and recognize the importance of their function in the judicial system.

Judge Julie Nicholson is a judge at the 52/3 District Court in Rochester Hills. The court also serves Auburn Hills, Rochester, Lake Angelus, Lake Orion, Oxford and the townships of Oakland, Addison, Leonard, Orion, and Oxford. You can e-mail your questions to nicholsonj@co.oakland.mi.us or mail them to Judge Nicholson's attention at 700 Barclay Circle, Rochester Hills, MI 48307.